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HONESTY

A SHORT SCREENPLAY BY
DENNIS J. MANNING

HONESTY

LIFE IN 3 CHAPTERS

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT — NIGHT (ROUND 1)

5:30 P.M. The sun slips toward the horizon.

ON SCREEN: *September 10 — The Invitation to Dance*

GRANT (37), a man of quiet confidence and gentle polish, sets a bottle of red wine in a bucket of ice. The bar gleams with vodka, gin, triple sec, vermouth.

GRANT
 (thinking)
 Cosmo or martini? Red wine or
 water?
 Well—let's see what the night
 brings.

He wears a loose polo, easy jeans. A hint of gray at his temple that somehow works in his favor.

He glances at the mirror — adjusts his collar, tests a smile. Too wide. He softens it. Approves.

GRANT (CONT'D)
 No need to give them everything the
 first go-around.

A KNOCK at the door. His heart ticks faster.

GRANT (CONT'D)
 (to himself)
 Easy, boy. Relax.

Another knock.

CARL (O.S.)
 Hello? Grant?

Grant catches his reflection once more — confidence mask on.

GRANT
 Be right there.

He opens the door.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT — CONTINUOUS

CARL (32), gym trainer and bartender, a man honed for his own pleasure.

Tank top, shorts, the swagger of someone born in mirrors.

He moves straight to the bar, scanning the bottles like it's home.

CARL

Grant, you're very easy to look at.

He shakes the martinis like a pro.

GRANT

Sure, I'll have a martini.

CARL

Good—'cause that's what we're having.

He pours.

CARL (CONT'D)

Alexa, play cool jazz.

ALEXA

Playing cool jazz.

Carl downs his drink in one go and pulls off his tank top.

Grant freezes — breath gone.

Carl turns, slowly. His body is art and arrogance.

GRANT

My God.

CARL

(laughing)

You like?

GRANT

(stammering)

Yes. I mean—yes.

CARL

This happens a lot.

He checks his watch.

CARL (CONT'D)
So, now or now. I prefer
now. Massage client at eight.

Carl drops his shorts. Grant is overtaken by the size of
Carl's manhood.

GRANT
(stammering)
Oh my...

CARL
(smiling, proud)
Yeah, I know. He's beautiful.
(beat)
I call him.. Rex.

GRANT
You... named him?

CARL
Of course. He's big. He's loud. He
makes me roar.

Grant blinks – twice – trying to reset his brain.

GRANT
(still processing)
Rex. Right. Of course. Does Rex...
talk?

CARL
(eyebrow up)
No, but he communicates.

Carl checks his watch – businesslike.

CARL (CONT'D)
I've got a massage client at eight.
We could do three, maybe four
rounds if you keep up.

GRANT
(nods, politely horrified)
Yes. Well. Endurance. Admirable.
(beat)
Dinner's out then?

CARL
Structured meal plan.

Grant's eyes dart to the mirror. He barely recognizes the man
in it.

GRANT
Right. Well—you and Rex have a lovely evening.

CARL
(easy)
You sure? We could just go two rounds?

Grant nods, as if it's normal.

Carl pulls up his shorts.

Time seems to drag.

Carl slips his shirt back on and heads out the door without missing a beat.

Silence.

Grant stares after him.

GRANT
(to himself)
Rex. He calls him Rex.
(beat)
Next.

He exhales, glances in the mirror. The smile doesn't come back.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT — NIGHT (ROUND 2)

5:30 P.M. A light rain falls.

ON SCREEN: *September 17 — The Invitation to Dance (Round 2)*

Grant places beers in the fridge. A bowl of pretzels on the counter.

TV ON — *Food Network.*

GRANT
Oops—wrong impression.

He flips to *SportsCenter*.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Fuck yeah! How about those Tigers?

He flexes in the mirror, half-mocking himself. The light is harsh — judgmental.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Let the shopper know what's in the
window.

A knock.

Grant pops a beer. Turns up the volume – armor up.

CLICK.

Door swings open.

BRENT (43), tall, ironed, controlled. Looks like he's never
spilled anything in his life.

Grant leans against the doorframe, chugging a beer.

GRANT (CONT'D)
S'up?

BRENT
Pardon?

GRANT
Come on in, Bro. Got the game on.

Brent hesitates, steps inside.

The TV blares – too loud, too alive.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Whatcha drinkin'?

BRENT
White wine.

GRANT
(half shouting)
You want white wine?

The game blares even louder now.

BRENT
(leaning in)
What? I can't hear you—the game—

GRANT
Hell yeah, I keep that on all the
time! Who do you like?

BRENT
What? Do I ride a bike? Can you
turn that down?

Grant drops the volume, proud of himself.

GRANT
There you go, Bro.

BRENT
It's Brent. My name is Brent.

GRANT
Sure, whatever.

Grant gets a beer and tosses it to Brent. Bad throw and a bad catch. The beer hits the floor and explodes.

SFX: Slow motion – beer explodes, foam baptizing Brent in pure chaos.

The sound dies. Just two men. One drenched. One confused. The game still plays somewhere in the distance.

SILENCE. 3 beats.

Brent freezes – poisoned by imperfection.

BRENT
I just ironed this shirt–

GRANT
You what?

BRENT
Ironed. You do know what that is?

GRANT
Duh–of course. But why?
(beat)
You wanna just skip to the naked part?

Beat. Brent blinks.

BRENT
This is a first date. I'm not above it–just not like this.

He turns and leaves.

Door shuts.

Silence.

Grant sighs. Crunches a pretzel.

GRANT
(into phone)
Hey Tammy, sushi or salad?
Yeah, no—didn't work out.
Guess we couldn't *iron out our
differences.*

He switches the channel back to *Cooking Network.*

The hiss of sauté pans. A soothing rhythm.

Grant looks around – the mess, the foam, the emptiness.

GRANT (CONT'D)
(scoffs softly)
I don't even like beer. Give me a
bag of chips any day.

He cleans up in silence. The clink of bottles. The towel on tile.

He starts to speak—stops. The reflection in the oven stares back.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I throw shade way better than I can
throw a football.

The apartment is too perfect. Too empty.

He laughs dryly.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Well, that just sounded like sad
melodrama. Maybe use that for
Inspiration for the Spring line,
"Sad in the Rain."

He fluffs the pillows on the couch.

GRANT (CONT'D)
It's that I'm lonely, I am just
tired of being alone. I want sex, I
want quick, but I want Sunday
mornings when you wake up together,
and just get out of my head.

He goes to look out the window. The city lights below and above. The camera catches his reflection in the window.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I have lots of friends. And most of
them all have that one, that I use
to have with Roger. So I don't get
(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)
out much, I have work, God I would
love to not have a routine

He catches sight of a sketch. *A woman, umbrella tilted.*

GRANT (CONT'D)
Dinner? A show? No? Oh—you have
someone.

He sets it down.

SAD WOMAN IN THE RAIN
(swept, barely audible)
Go get lost.

Grant freezes.

He lifts the drawing.

SAD WOMAN IN THE RAIN (CONT'D)
Go get lost. Go find yourself.

GRANT
(chuckling)
Now you've got opinions.

He checks his phone — *Tammy: "30 mins?"*

Mirror again. Candlelight softens his edges.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Let's just go with it.
Who do we pretend to be next time?
Prince Charming? The Wolf?
(pause)
How about... just Grant?

Beat.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Who the hell is he?

Lights off. He goes out the door.

GRANT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
He calls him Rex!
(he laughs) "Bro" what was I
thinking?

GRANT (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(from the hallway,
muffled)
REX! ROAR!

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT — NIGHT (ROUND 3)

5:30 P.M. Light rain.

ON SCREEN: September 24 — The Invitation to Dance (Round 3)

Grant hums along to salsa. A Cuban shirt. Capri khakis.
Loafers, no socks.

Two chains around his neck. He's feeling it — maybe too much.

GRANT
Señor Frankie's gonna feel Papi's
heat tonight!

He laughs. Checks the mirror. It smiles back — old friend
now.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Don't shop when you're hungry.
Hungry? I'm starving for
love.

A knock.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Si, si! Coming!

He opens the door.

Heels. Skirt. Pearls. Blue eyes. *FRANKIE SANCHEZ* (30s)
beams with warmth, a bottle of champagne in hand.

FRANKIE
Hi! I'm Frankie. Third date this
month. Guess I'm persistent.

She twirls a strand of hair.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
There are so many strange men—some
only want sex.
(laughs)
Listen to me. I'm rambling.

Grant just stares. Processing.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Alexander McQueen capris? Love.

A silence. She signs gently:

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
Are you deaf? It's okay, I'm rusty
at sign language.

Grant half laughs, lost.

GRANT
You're... Frankie?

FRANKIE
Yep. Born this way.

GRANT
I thought you were a man.

FRANKIE
Nope. Always been me. I mean, I'm
not opposed to transgender—be who
you are inside, right?

GRANT
I'm just... a little confused.

FRANKIE
Geeze, I'm sorry. Did I do
something wrong? I loved your ad.

She pulls out her phone, reading it aloud with a grin.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
"Looking for someone who laughs
easy, opens their heart and arms to
new experiences, and asks the next
person they meet—'What is your
passion?'"

He softens.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)
So—what's your passion?

GRANT
Life.

She grins, hugs him unexpectedly.

FRANKIE
Good answer.

She eases him inside, both laughing.

EXT. GRANT'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

FRANKIE (O.S.)
Love the Latin music! I have no
idea what they're saying, but I
love it!

Their laughter trails off as the door closes. Fade out

TRANSITION: the faint sound of jazz dissolves into the hum
of city wind.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT - RISING ACTION

November 20, 5:30 P.M.

Outside, autumn leaves drift past the window.

Grant sketches alone, a quiet rhythm. His cell phone rings.
He puts it on speaker. He continues to work.

RASHONDA is Grant's manager at the design agency. She's
quick. Abrupt. Icy. All blade, no sheath.

RASHONDA (V.O.)
Darling.

GRANT
By tomorrow.

RASHONDA (V.O.)
Sweetheart.

GRANT
Ten A.M. Tammy will drop them off.

RASHONDA (V.O.)
Will I-

GRANT
-Love them? Please. No one warms
the Ice Queen like I do.

RASHONDA (V.O.)
Talk dirty to me.

GRANT
Can't. Hangnail.

RASHONDA (V.O.)
You're cruel. I want to see you.

GRANT
I'll send a selfie. Bye, love.

RASHONDA (V.O.)
Ten A.M., darling. Don't make me
send the hounds.

She laughs — sharp and gone.

A *text buzzes*: Cruella DeVil meme with "THE HOUNDS."

He smiles faintly, sets it down.

GRANT
So I had a love. He died.
Three years ago.
Everyone says "move on."
Yeah... not that easy. How do you
replace Roger?

A knock.

He sighs, opens the door mid-sentence—

GRANT (CONT'D)
(talking out to the room
the door knocker person)
I have no time for/

—and freezes.

TEDDY (30s), UPS uniform, green eyes, gentle smile, stands
holding a teddy bear wrapped in plastic.

TEDDY
Hi, are you Grant Thomas? Or Thomas
Grant? Happens all the time.
They mix up the names.
(beat, smiling)
I deal with it.

Grant nods, entranced.

Teddy gives wink. Snaps his fingers politely.

Grant seems in a dream state.

SFX. Go to Slow Motion

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(sounding slow motion)
Mr. Thomas? Mr. Grant you ok?

BACK TO Real-Time.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Just sign here.

He hands the scanner over. Their fingers brush. Electricity.

GRANT
Who's it from?

TEDDY
Box got destroyed. Maybe there's a note.

Beat.

Teddy gets close and inspects the package.

Grant breathes him in. Heaven.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
Well on his little paw there's a brand name maybe you call and they can help you.

GRANT
You wanna come in?

TEDDY
(laughing)
I get that a lot. Uniform thing. Fantasy, right?

GRANT
No-sorry, I-

TEDDY
All good. So you got your package and I am on the clock and got 10 more deliveries. You have a great Thanksgiving

GRANT
When is it?

TEDDY
Tomorrow. Parade passes right by here. Great view.

He starts to leave.

GRANT
Hey-what's your name?

TEDDY
Teddy. Like the bear.

He winks, goes.

GRANT
You just never know.

Grant unwraps the bear. A tag: *TEDDYBEAR INC.*

He presses the paw.

THE BEAR
(mechanical)
ROOOAR! I'm Teddy!

Grant laughs. Finds a note on the tag:

> *Hey Grant. Nice to meet you. I like hugs.*

He smiles. Fades out.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT — THE CLIMAX

December 24, 5:30 P.M. — "Blue Hawaii" Theme.

Holiday lights. Tropical colors. Perfection.

GRANT
Martha Stewart would be proud. Blue
Hawaii, eat your heart out.

He looks in the mirror, approving his own audacity.

GRANT (CONT'D)
If you're gonna wear it—own it.

Music: *Elvis croons softly.*

A knock.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Too early for Santa.

He opens the door—

—and there's TEDDY. Same green eyes. Green shirt, black pants, Santa hat. Warm as sunlight.

TEDDY
Merry Christmas.

Grant smiles and then without thinking tears well up. In an instant Grant is swept up in a hug that is like a security blanket. Strong, comforting, not sexual, just love abounding.

TEDDY (CONT'D)
(softly)
Oh Grant, it's ok. Go ahead.

Grant softly weeps. He steps back.

GRANT
I don't know what just happened. I
am not like this.

TEDDY
You just shared your passion, life.

Grant exhales – peace.

GRANT
Will you come in?

TEDDY
Yes.

They enter.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

The 50's holiday music is playing. Several plates of festive holiday appetizers are scattered around the room.

Teddy spies a large tray of home-made holiday cookies.

Grant passes the mirror. For the first time, he doesn't check it. He catches his reflection by accident – and smiles anyway.

TEDDY
I Love to bake holiday cookies.

GRANT
You do? So do I.

TEDDY & GRANT
(in unison surprisingly)
I always baked with my mother.

They stop. Look. Laugh.

Teddy looks around.

TEDDY
I am sensing a theme.

GRANT
Oh I always do a theme.

Teddy looks like a detective spying for clues. He looks at Grant. Gives him the cue to "turn around" to see the entire outfit.

TEDDY
Blue Hawaii.

GRANT
(surprised)
Well, yes!

Grant looks at Teddy. He smiles

TEDDY
So what are your plans.

GRANT
Nothing, I have the entire evening open.

TEDDY
Ah, waiting for Santa?

GRANT
Well you do have the hat?

They both laugh. Teddy sits. Casual. Easy. Grant feels his sense of peace.

GRANT (CONT'D)
So it was you that gave me the
Teddy Bear.

Grant looks over and he has dressed the bear in a Blue Hawaii outfit.

TEDDY
Yes.

GRANT
Why? And Why did you just leave?
You really don't work for a
delivery company, right?

TEDDY
Caught me! I am an actor for one
trade and I put on a costume and
played a role.

GRANT
Ok, so?

TEDDY

I kept seeing you—outside the café,
crossing Eighth—always looked like
someone waiting for something.

GRANT

Rashonda.

TEDDY

She terrifies me.

GRANT

(laugh)

She scares everybody.

GRANT (CONT'D)

I am glad you found me.

TEDDY

Me, too. I want to make sure you
are following your passion.

GRANT

My passion?

TEDDY

Life.

GRANT

Oh that? So over-rated. I, a,
well, what's your passion?

TEDDY

Creating.

GRANT

Hmm. So, what happens now?

TEDDY

If I don't have one of those
cookies right now, I will not
forgive myself.

Grant gets up and gets the tray.

Teddy lingers over each one, there are several to select
from. He lands on a peanut butter blossom.

He takes it. Smells it. Eats it and melts.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

My God, that is so good.

Grant smiles.

GRANT
Secret ingredient's "forgiveness."

The holiday music swells. The camera finds the Blue Hawaii theme all around the room.

They laugh, bake, dance. A warmth fills the room.

INT. GRANT'S BEDROOM — FALLING ACTION

Christmas Morning.

Snow light floods the room. The bed, a cloud of white comfort. Grant wakes. A lump under the covers.

GRANT
Teddy? Merry Christmas.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Teddy Bear. Wake up.

Grant reaches over to do a bear-hug and he hugs a pillow. He pulls back the sheet. Empty.

He looks down—naked. Shock.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I never sleep naked.

He scrambles for boxers, robe, Winnie-the-Pooh slippers.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Teddy?

Silence.

He retraces steps — glasses, cookie tray, the window.

Nothing.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Guess Christmas is for children.
You wait for that day, you open the
pretty box and "SURPRISE" (pause)
Oh thank you just what I've always
wanted.

He glances outside — snow drifts gently down.

SFX. The room freezes and he looks around. Only his head moves. Clues seem to be everywhere.

He clocks the empty blossom tray... then freezes—the bear now wears a green shirt, black pants, Santa hat.

BACK TO REAL
TIME

He picks up the tray and looks.

TEDDY (V.O.)
The peanut butter blossoms are my
favorite.

Not a single Blossom cookie left.

Grant picks up the Bear. He presses the paw.

THE BEAR
(mechanical)
I want to make sure you're
following your passion.

He laughs, near tears.

GRANT
You and me both.

At the window, his breath fogs the glass — reveals a faint heart.

He doesn't see it. Turns away.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Teddy? Who am I calling to?

He slumps on the couch.

He tosses the bear aside. Gets up. Paces.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I mean I smell him on me (he
sniffs) Well, I think I do.

He goes the bar and pours a strong drink.

CARL (V.O.)
(easy, forward)
Grant, you are very easy to look
at. Say hello to Rex!

SFX. The sound of Carl shaking the gin martinis in the shaker.

He puts the drink down, untouched.

GRANT

Ok maybe I am just going crazy. It happens all the time. People just go, batshit crazy for no reason.

Grant appears to be hyperventilating. He runs to the fridge.

POV. All the beer in the fridge.

GRANT (V.O.)

You wanna just skip to the naked part?

Grant screams in shame.

GRANT

Oh, My God, I said that? You wanna just skip to the naked part?

Grant laughs.

He does the sign language:

FRANKIE

Are you deaf? It's okay—I'm a little rusty with my sign language.

He goes to the window. Sees the snow. He sighs a few times. His breath fogs the window. As he turns he misses what the fog reveals. The Camera catches just the glimpse of the shape of a heart.

He turns off the music. He slumps on the couch. Teddy, the bear, is on his back and seems to be smiling.

GRANT

Oh sure you get to smile. Me. What did I learn?

He looks over at his sketches.

GRANT (CONT'D)

(snaps)

And if you, Miss Rain-in-Spring, start talking, I will rip you to shreds.

Tears fall down his face.

GRANT (CONT'D)

I just wanted...I needed to feel again. Something. Except not afraid and not alone. And not on Christmas.

Tears come. He rubs his eyes.

He sighs. He rubs his temple and the room blurs for a moment.

INT. FRONT DOOR OF GRANT'S APARTMENT

In the blur the front door opens.

POV. Just a pair of men's boots with snow, quietly coming in.

Grant is unaware.

The room comes back into focus.

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT

Grant rubs his head.

GRANT

I thought Teddy was real. (laughs)
It turns out he's just a bear.

He pulls the bear close to him.

The man in the background doesn't move or make a sound.

Grant looks to the window and the interior fog wisps away. He thought he saw something.

He darts to the window and breaths again. There it is.

POV. On the window fog a HEART is drawn and inside the word:
LIFE.

GRANT (CONT'D)

That's my passion. But I haven't
been passionate for 3 years. What
am I doing? Wasting time on these
dates. Trying to be someone I'm
not. I don't want to be locked in
this cell anymore.

SFX: The jingle of keys.

He doesn't react.

Another breath on glass — a *second heart* appears. Inside
it: *CREATE.*

GRANT (CONT'D)

Who put that there?

A soft voice – behind him.

TEDDY
I did. Merry Christmas.

Grant turns – Teddy stands in the doorway, snow-dusted, arms open.

They meet halfway, embrace – the *best Teddy-bear hug ever.*

INT. GRANT'S APARTMENT – DENOUEMENT

Montage – Christmas Day.

* Grant and Teddy make breakfast.

* Cookie crumbs, milk moustaches.

* They unwrap gifts for no one and laugh: *"It's just what I wanted!"*

* They fall back into bed.

Later-jackets, Santa hats.

They step out into the snowy city, hand in hand.

The door closes.

The apartment glows in *Blue Hawaii* light.

The camera glides:

– Two hearts on the frosted window.

– Empty cookie tray.

– The Teddy Bear on the chair.

A faint shimmer lands on his nose.

Silence.

THE BEAR
(soft, old-soul)
This is your life.
Do what you love and do it often.

The faint sound of keys jingling – a door opening. Light spills into the room.

The bear winks again.

THE BEAR (CONT'D)
 (soft, old-soul)
 This is your life. Share it.

Grant rushes in, breathless, still smiling from the hallway.

He scoops the bear into his arms.

GRANT
 You're coming with us.
 No one should be alone on Christmas
 Day.

He hugs the bear tightly – warmth, joy, belief – then turns
 for the door.

The bear looks back at the camera, over Grant's shoulder.

That same twinkle.

The bear winks.

CUT TO BLACK.

A flicker in the bear's glass eye – as if recording.

MUSIC: "Blue Hawaii" (instrumental reprise).

THE END

CHAPTER 2 1953

A STORY OF REFLECTIONS, RECIPES, AND LIES TOLD IN DAYLIGHT.

INT. FRANCISCO & SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (ROUND 1)

5:30 P.M. The sun slips toward the horizon.

ON SCREEN: *September 10, 1953 - The Merry-Go-Round

FRANCISCO (45) a well dressed, well-groomed Hispanic man, restaurant owner. He has an eye for style and correctness in everything. He loves life.

SHIRLEY (45) his wife. Bored with life. Bored with Francisco. 20 years of marriage has left her with as much emotion of a jellyfish.

Francisco, opens the shades to let the evening romance enter the windows of their NYC 18th floor, apartment.

He turns on the radio, a song in the scope of Tony Bennett plays. He sets out a cheese ball and deviled eggs.

FRANCISCO

Shirley, my love, just a few more
touches and we're ready!

He hums and heads into the kitchen.

Shirley enters. She wears a red cocktail dress but doesn't "own the look" and as she looks in the mirror the image makes a face like a 5-year-old would do and sticks out her tongue.

SHIRLEY

Don't you start with me.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

(snippy)

Just keep up appearances. If you
don't like the dress, change it.
Maybe a pantsuit? Can I wear the
dress?

SHIRLEY

Well you can't wear it if I don't
wear it.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

But I wear it so much better than
you.

Shirley scoffs. She close the windows. Looks at the deviled eggs and throws them on the floor. She puts the cheese ball on the floor and then kneeling beside it she looks, adjusts the angle. She nods and then "falls" on the cheese ball.

SQUISH. The cheeseball is flattened by her red cocktail dress.

SHIRLEY
(yelling as if she fell)
Ohhhhh!

Francisco runs in.

FRANCISCO
Shirley, my love! What happened?
Are you ok?

He looks at her dress, soiled now with the cheese ball.
Deviled eggs crushed into the sleeve.

SHIRLEY
(feigns crying)
Oh Francisco, my sweet, loving
husband. I slip and then fell right
on your St. Mary's Church Supper,
grand-prize winning ball of cheese.
Oh it's ruined. All that work.
Smashed like a bug on the floor.

FRANCISCO
No, no honey don't worry. The
important thing is, are you ok?

SHIRLEY
And as I was falling, it seemed
like an eternity, I grabbed the
tray of deviled eggs. Your Auntie
Jean's recipe that you make
religiously the first Friday, of
the 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th month
each year. Now we have till wait
till December.

Shirley "cries" into Francisco's shoulder. He hugs her with
true devotion.

FRANCISCO
Oh my precious love. Let's not
worry about old family recipes or
prize-winning food. Now let's get
you up and make sure you have your
sea legs.

He helps her up. She dramatizes the "pain."

SHIRLEY

Ohhh. Ohhh my back. I've ruined the night. Our special night.

FRANCISCO

Shirley, I just took off work early from the restaurant to celebrate this nothing-special-day with you. Ben said he would cover for me, So I will close the restaurant tomorrow.

SHIRLEY

Oh what a clumsy, fool I am. You leaving your restaurant early for me and then (she jolts) OWWWW, oh the pain, I've ruined the evening!

FRANCISCO

Shirley we have had 20 years of evenings. Wonderful evenings! And a lifetime more to come.

Shirley rolls her eyes. Francisco doesn't see.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Would anything help?

SHIRLEY

I think (plain and flat) a double gin martini and 3 aspirin should start to ease my worries.

Francisco goes to the bar to make the drink. He hums.

Shirley sees her reflection in a side mirror. The reflections waves.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

(quietly whispering)

Oh aren't we the clever 50's housewife?

SHIRLEY

Shh. Hush now.

FRANCISCO

Here you go my darling, here sip this. Can you sit up? Oh the dress is staining my mother's vintage couch with the cheeseball and the egg.

SHIRLEY
 (over the top)
 OWWWWWW. Oh the pain

She downs the martini in one gulp. Hands the glass to Francisco.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 (flatly)
 Another. Quickly.

FRANCISCO
 Oh yes, honey. DO you think you could manage to get up to change out of that dress. Then I can have a go at the stain before it sets in.

She "struggles" to get up. Over dramatizes the pain. Stops once to weep softly.

SHIRLEY
 Oh, I have ruined the night.

FRANCISCO
 No, no, mustn't think that Angel. Now you go freshen up. The ham casserole has another 30-minutes.

She limps off. He goes to the kitchen and comes back with vinegar and baking soda to set to work on the stain.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 (like a detective, cold)
 So you think she really fell?

Francisco hums a light tune.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION (CONT'D)
 Pal, wise up. That dame is tryin' to pull a fast on us and/

FRANCISCO
 Now you hush. My love Shirley would do no such thing.

SHIRLEY (O.S.)
 Owwwwwww! The pain. IS my martini ready so I can bare up?

FRANCISCO
 You see! She's in pain I must attend to her.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
Save it for the stage, doll. That
little robin sings a different tune
when you are not in the room.

Francisco shakes up another martini and brings it to Shirley.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION (V.O.)
You think he has no clue.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION (V.O.)
The truth would kill him.

SHIRLEY (V.O.)
Cisco, call Dr. Jenkins. OWWWW

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
Well maybe she over-acts just a
smidge.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION (V.O.)
You two gonna be ok for the next
card game.

Two redefections see each other in opposing mirrors and
smile. Raising martini glasses. "Cheers." They laugh.

Fade out.

INT. FRANCISCO & SHIRLEY'S - NIGHT (ROUND 2)

5:30 P.M. A light rain falls.

ON SCREEN: *September 17 - The Merry-Go-Round (Round 2)

Shirley enters with a striking silver, glittery dress. Her
hair is in a classic French twist. She smokes like Bette
Davis and sips her cocktail like her, too.

She opens the windows with style.

SHIRLEY
Oh I want air in this room! I want
lights.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
I want to dance! I want the
theatre!

Shirley casts at gaze at her reflection.

SHIRLEY
 (venom dripping)
 Darling, remember if I don't go out
 on the town, neither do you.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
 God, you can be so mean!

SHIRLEY
 I know and that's where we are
 different. I am mean. You are
 just a reflection of mean.

The reflection scoffs.

Shirley puts on the radio, a big band type music swoons. She
 dances.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
 Cisco, darling we leave in just a
 few minutes. I'm going to put on
 my Chanel No. 5.

She floats off to the bedroom.

Francisco enters. Not dressed. In pajamas. Slippers.

He sees the windows open and he closes them.

FRANCISCO
 Brrr. That's how you catch a nasty
 Fall cold.

The music swells. He snaps off the radio.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 That god one of us has the chops to
 take charge around here. Good man.

FRANCISCO
 (teasing)
 Now don't you start.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 (like a wise guy)
 Hey, Sport, get with it!

Francisco ignores him. He looks around the room enjoying
 every detail.

The reflection snaps.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION (CONT'D)

Listen I don't want to be the only
playing hard ball, but did you for
get about the evening out, tonight.

Panic sets in. He looks down and sees that he is in Pajamas.

FRANCISCO

What was I thinking? I was tired,
long days at the restaurant. I
forgot.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION

Ouuuf. That's not gonna go down
easy. (he claps twice) Chop. Chop.
Get dressed.

Francisco darts out of the room.

Shirley enters. Notices the windows closed and the radio
off.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

(sarcastic)

It was him. He did it.

SHIRLEY

Well who else? You think after 20
years, 10 months and 4 days I don't
know who irritates me more than bad
breath?

She opens the windows turns on the music and looks around the
room. Disgusted with everything she sees.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

Pedestrian. That's what it is. You
want *VOGUE* and you get *LIFE*
magazine. How do you stand it?

SHIRLEY

You don't know. Well, I mean you
do to some degree, but you don't
have him touching you. And calling
you "Honey" every day and the same,
predictable sex every Saturday at
9:15pm that last for 7 minutes.

Shirley throws her drink against the window. It smashes.

SFX. SLOW MOTION of the glass breaking. Shirley smokes and
the sound of the smoke exhaling slowly is heard.

BACK TO REAL TIME.

Francisco enters. We sees the glass shattered and gets right to cleaning it up. He sweeps, blots and gets the vacuum out.

Shirley looks, as if she has never seen that before.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Where did that come from?

FRANCISCO
(easy)
Oh Honey you are such a teaser.

SHIRLEY
Seriously, we have one?

FRANCISCO
Well of course. IT's in the hall closet. Ramona puts it there after she comes in to clean for you every Tuesday and Thursday.

SHIRLEY
Speaking of that Rita.

FRANCISCO
Butternut, it is Ramona.

She glares. She catches the reflection mouth the word "Butternut" and she laughs.

SHIRLEY
Yes, Ramona, I need her 6 days a week. She can have off on Wednesdays.

Francisco sees his reflection mouth "6-days WTF?"

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)
Yes, I am tired of cooking and doing the laundry. I need my nails done and she can help with the shopping.

Francisco's reflection is shaking his head "no."

FRANCISCO
Certainly! 6-days a week will be perfect. Great idea.

Francisco's reflection lights a cigar and sits down, throws his hands up.

Shirley looks at Francisco and his attire and gives a disapproving look.

SHIRLEY

Cisco, you are not wearing *that* tonight are you? Please the Jones' would make a mockery of me.

Francisco looks down, embarrassed.

FRANCISCO

No and thank you for always keeping me fashion forward. Did you see I got that stain from the cheeseball that was on Momma's couch.

SHIRLEY

Of course. You are invaluable. Now just wear the black jacket and we are good to go.

Francisco heads off excited.

Shirley takes her cigarette and puts it out on the couch burning a hole. A little smoke rises.

SHIRLEY (CONT'D)

(surprised)

Oh my!

Francisco comes back and she casually puts a pillow over the new hole.

She looks at Francisco then sighs.

He knows that look.

FRANCISCO

I won't blend well with the Jones' will I.

SHIRLEY

It is always easier when you realize your shortcoming rather than having me point them out every time. Yes you should stay home.

FRANCISCO

Right what would I even have to talk about? The restaurant.

SHIRLEY

God no, who wants to hear another chapter from "Tales of the Greasy Diner!."

Francisco's Reflection takes his tie off and kicks his shoes against the wall.

Shirley's reflection is looking in a hand mirror adoring her own reflection.

Shirley holds out her hand. Francisco takes out his wallet and hands her a \$20 bill. Her hand doesn't move nor does her gaze. He places another \$20. The hand doesn't move.

FRANCISCO

Oh yes you'll need cab fare.

He gives her another \$20. She puts the bills in her purse. She looks in the mirror and her reflection winks and blows a kiss.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Should I

SHIRLEY

Don't wait up. Not quite sure when I'll be home. Perhaps on the wings of the sunrise.

She kisses Francisco on the forehead and leaves.

CLICK.

Francisco sits down. He looks around. Loving everything that he sees. Pictures of the two of them. Trinkets, memories. Tears start to roll down his face.

FRANCISCO

(convincing himself)

Who would want to hear "Tales of the Greasy Diner."

Tears fall. He let's them.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION

Awe come on pal, don't do this. It's not so bad. He we go the evening to ourselves.

Francisco looks up. A smile starts.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION (CONT'D)

That's the spirit. We can play SOLITAIRE. SHADOW BOXING. Fold the laundry.

Francisco lightens up and gets up and smiles.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION (CONT'D)
But we got one detail.

He nods to the standing mirror. Francisco understands. He gets a sheet from the closet.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
No, no, come on, don't do that.
Look it's not my fault.

He places the sheet over the mirror.

Muffled sounds heard. Then quiet down.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
Attaboy. So, you wanna box? I got
a mean left hook (Ha Ha).

Francisco starts to "spar" with the mirror.

The camera pulls back as the two laugh.

FRANCISCO
That the best you got.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
Yea, pal come closer I dare you!

Muffled tears are heard beneath the sheet. The camera goes behind the sheet to see Shirley's Reflection sitting in a sad room, with a single lamp on, no shade. She gently weeps.

FADE OUT.

INT. FRANCISCO & SHIRLEY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT (ROUND 3)

5:30 P.M. Light rain.

ON SCREEN: September 24 - The Merry-Go-Round (Round 3)

Shirley is wearing a festive Grass skirt, flowers in her hair, a bikini top (she can't really afford to wear this but she pulls it off), bare feet. The living room is decorated for a LUAU Party.

Mai Tai's are made with little umbrellas. Island music is playing. Shirley is dancing and humming.

SHIRLEY
Oh I love good party.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

(excited)

Where are we going? God knows no party has been in this room for 19 years.

SHIRLEY

Now, you hush. We are going to play nice for a change.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

Sweetie, sit down. You OK? I mean of you did I did and I want to be dead.

Shirley pays no mind to her reflection.

The door opens and Francisco comes in. He looks beat-down. Tired. He passes by Shirley and she dances around him, festive. Lands a kiss on his lips. He doesn't notice.

He sits on the couch and stares.

SHIRLEY

Honey! Dance with me.

Francisco looks around. Now seeing the details.

FRANCISCO

Shirley what is all of this?

SHIRLEY

Vacation! In the living room! If you can't be in Hawaii let's *pretend to be there!*

Francisco gets up. Shirley hands him a Mai Tai. She swirls to the music.

Francisco looks at his reflection. He has a Lei around his neck, board shorts, sunglasses and smokes a Cuban cigar.

FRANCISCO

How did you? We don't even smoke?

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION

In here we do. We fucking *light it up, brother!*

FRANCISCO

Hey let's watch our language.

His reflection waves him off and drinks the Mai Tai.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)
Shirley what is happening?

Shirley comes up and dances with him. She leads him along.

SHIRLEY
Come on, Cisco, you lead.

FREEZE. The room holds. The look in each other's eyes and a spark of magic bursts into the room.

UNFREEZE. Francisco rips off his shirt. Down to an A-Shirt. He kicks off his shoes. Drops his pants to his boxers.

Shirley is clapping and laughing. A disco ball appears overhead. Lights and shadows dance across the ceiling and around the room. Francisco drinks his Mai Tai and then - THE TANGO.

Francisco leads. Tight. Close. Sexual. They Dance. He dips her. Spins her. Twirls her. The music builds. The romantic energy that has been shut down for 19 out of 20 years bubbles over and out! Paradise explodes.

The Camera swirls. The images of a lost paradise come in and out of view. They drink. They laugh. They LOVE.

Falling on the couch. Passion that was long dead has come alive.

INT. FRANCISCO AND SHIRLEY'S LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Both naked on the couch. This is 1953, so modesty is everything.

Francisco and Shirley wrapped in 2nd-Honeymoon Love.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
(proud)
That's my boy.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
(snickering)
It won't last. He'll be a wet dishrag in 20 minutes.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
Well then, give him 19 minutes of happiness. I'm so proud of myself.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
(scoff)
I told her this was a bad idea.
(MORE)

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION (CONT'D)
 We talked about this. Now he'll
 think she loves him.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 (challenging)
 Hey what's not to love?

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
 Oh You, I could love you.

Francisco's Reflection's eyebrow goes up and he growls.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 Hey Momma come over here.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
 (direct)
 Focus.

Francisco and Shirley seem lost to the world.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 Can't we just let them have this
 time?

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
 (mean)
 No. He covered me with a sheet.
 Shut me out. He'll pay for that.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 Ok, Ok, calm down. I am sure he
 didn't mean to shut you out. I
 know I never would, Doll.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
 Don't you try and be MR. Nice Guy.
 That's not you. And She doesn't
 not love that man.

SHIRLEY
 Cisco, I love you.

They kiss.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION
 (screams)
 Ohhh. How could she say that.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION
 My boy can dance, right. The tango
 was... *HOT!*

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

Oh sure one dance you get in their
underpants.

FRANCISCO'S REFLECTION

Well, it did work on you a long
time ago, Doll.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

Stop calling me "Doll" you are
getting me off track.

SHIRLEY

(sweet)
Cisco, I'm sorry.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

NOOOOOO! Never say that!

Shirley's reflection slams her fists on the mirror. The standing mirror wobbles then starts to teeter forward. Francisco sees it from the couch. He darts up and catches just before it hits the ground.

Shirley and Francisco look. Shrug. He wraps his shirt around Shirley and leads her to the bedroom, taking the lead. He struts a little.

SHIRLEY

Oh Francisco...Me like when you
take charge.

They exit to the bedroom.

CLICK.

The camera does a slow pan around the room. Remnants of the Luau every where. Fun was had!

The Camera finds Francisco's Reflection. He is grinning from ear to ear, proud man. Smoking a cigar like a king. He drinks the Mai Tai. He Belches. He Smiles. He winks.

The Camera finds Shirley's Reflection. She tries not to notice the Reflection of Francisco. Another belch is heard and Francisco's reflection is heard laughing. Shirley's reflection smiles.

Their glass surfaces ripple with heat.

SHIRLEY'S REFLECTION

Men. They can be such fun.

Smoke from the cigar blows across her face. She winks.

"BLUE HAWAII" plays somewhere in the distance.

Waves lap in on faded shores of memories.

Somewhere, faintly –

THE BEAR (V.O.)

This is your life. Share it.

The reflections pause... listening.

Then the music carries them away.

FADE.

END OF 1953

CHAPTER 3 - THE PARK

EXT. CENTRAL PARK — EARLY AFTERNOON (LOOPING)

2:30 P.M. The sun past the midday point of an Indian Summer Day.

ON SCREEN: *September 10 — Looping*

BRIAN (57) thinning blonde hair, still wears it too long. Forehead shows more age than grace. Tall with slight pouch of a belly. Not as good as he once was. Not as bad as it could be.

He has cool sunglasses on. Brian was always cool. He vapes.

On the park bench he has two backpacks. One his, one his daughter, Wisteria's. She is 3.

Brian looks out to kids playing that we don't see.

BRIAN
(father-like but not
really)
Wisty, don't go too far, daddy is
right here. I got to be able to see
you and you see me.

He does the "two-finger-I-see-motion" and a child's laughter is heard off screen.

He pulls a large covered plastic bottle with a plastic straw to his lips and drinks. Long and slow.

He vapes. His eyes close. He sighs.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
(sadly)
How the hell did I ever get this
point?

Leaves fall under footsteps. Easy. JOE (57) enters. Sandals, tank top. Good shape. Good head of black hair. Scruff. Laser-blue eyes. Joe and Brian have been friends since 15.

JOE
The Park? Seriously. God you look
like shit.

They laugh. Brian reaches into the cooler and pulls out a large, covered plastic cup that is similar to his. Green Bay Packers logo. He hands it to Joe.

JOE (CONT'D)
(scoff)
I think I'll pass on the sports
drink.

Brian nods to him to take a sip. Joe rolls his eyes and takes a big sip.

Joe coughs.

JOE (CONT'D)
Jesus! Vodka and Cranberry?

BRIAN
If you want a Screwdriver I got
that too.

They laugh again.

JOE
Aren't you on duty.

Brian does the "Two-finger-to-the-eyes" again and smiles. Wisteria laughs just off screen.

WISTERIA
(child of 3 voice)
I see you daddy!

He gives her a "Thumbs Up" and Joe follows suit and gives a "Thumbs up."

They sit there in easy silence. Brian vapes again.

JOE
That shit'll kill you.

BRIAN
God I hope so.

JOE
(laughs)
You won't wanna die of cancer, not
like Tommy's wife. God that was a
sin. Suffered like a bastard.

Brian vapes again.

BRIAN

Yep. He got through it. We always do. Three of us always get through.

Joe looks out. Far away.

Kids laughter heard.

JOE

I never would have been a good father.

BRIAN

Fuuuuck That. You would be a great father. Still time.

They laugh.

JOE

My friend do the math. We are 57.

BRIAN

You're older.

Joe squints—busted but smiling

JOE

(continues)

So we are both *around* 57 so when Misty

BRIAN

It's "Wisty"

JOE

Is 18 you will be 72. 70-fucking-2.

BRIAN

Look at me! In top form.

Brian vapes. Let's it slow.

JOE

72! Nobody in my family lived that long. Ever.

BRIAN

You got shitty genes. Life sucks for you. My Grandma is 94. She smokes. She drinks.

JOE
She's miserable. Always
complaining. Always asking that
same damn question.

BRIAN
(imitates Grandma)
*Joey when you are gonna get
married? Get a girl. What's the
problem?*

JOE
Kill me tomorrow.

BRIAN
(smartass)
Why not today?

Joe hits him on the back of the head like they were 15 again.

JOE
Because, dumbass, I am here with
you.

Brian kisses Joe on the cheek, playful.

BRIAN
Joey, I didn't know you cared. You
mean you like me? Can we go
steady.

Easy silence again.

JOE
What's in your cup?

BRIAN
(flat)
Jack 'n' Coke. I like the caffeine
buzz.

Joe takes and sips. Chokes. Hands it back.

JOE
Christ, that stuff'll kill you.

BRIAN
Look at that: two for two.

Brian vapes. Smiles.

EXT. PARK BENCH - AN HOUR LATER

The September sun is warm and gentle as two old friends talk on half-truths, old memories and future possibilities.

The kids are playing off in the near foreground. A ball rolls in. Brian gets up and gives it a soft kick back.

The ball rolls back in, this time to Joe. He just looks at. Brian gives him the look like, "Come on, play"

WISTY (O.S.)
(little girl voice)
Uncle Joe, kick it!

Joe gets up and without much fanfare gives the ball a light kick.

KIDS (O.S.)
YAY!

BRIAN
(calling out to Wisteria)
Ok have fun. Uncle Joey and I just hanging out, watching you.

Brian looks over at Joe and just smiles. Joe looks at him.

JOE
What?

BRIAN
You will be a great father.

JOE
(scoff)
Be? What timeline are you on?

The sound of tired feet, rustle through leaves. Feet that have been worn down, broken. Moving but without much purpose.

TOM (56) in Faded jeans, Keds sneakers, a T-Shirt that says "Impeach Nixon" and a Yankees Baseball cap. He is a slight build. 6' tall. He stand stilted, erect. Like a gentle wind would break him.

TOM
(questioning)
Same park as always?

JOE
(jumping right on that
line)
That's what I said.

Joe gets up and gives Tom a big hug. Brian does the same. Brian grabs a yellow plastic cup with Sleeping Beauty on it—clearly part of the set. He hands it to Tom.

TOM
No thanks, Brian, I was hoping for
a stronger drink.

JOE
(sipping)
Oh just drink, what kind did you
get?

Tom looks. Not convinced. Takes a big sip. Chokes. Coughs.

TOM
Jesus!

BRIAN
Screwdriver. Has a lot of "Screw"
and I did fresh squeeze the OJ.

Brian smiles. Tom and Joe shake their heads.

WISTY (O.S.)
Daddy! Come play!

Brain looks. Sighs. Gets up.

BRIAN
Guys give me 5 minutes to tire her
out.

TOM
(dry wit)
She's gonna run you ragged.

Brian vapes. Blows the smoke out cool.

BRIAN
No fucking way, I got this.

WISTY (O.S.)
Daddy you said a bad word!

Brian shakes his head. He heads of to WISTY and the kids.

Joe and Tom, clink their cups together.

JOE & TOM
(informal, a little
awkward)
Cheers.

The sit in silence. Not as easy as it was with Brian and Joe. Old pains don't go away completely.

TOM
You been watching the Series?

Joe gives Tom a wisecrack look. Shakes his head "no."

A squirrel comes up. Sniffs at Tom and then goes to Joe. Jumps up and sniffs his hand. Tom looks and smiles.

JOE
Animals like me.

The squirrel seems to kiss Joe's hand and then hops away.
Silence.

You can feel the tension.

TOM
(abrupt)
So where the fuck did you go?

JOE
We're doing this now?

TOM
Well we didn't do it the last 20 years. So yes. Why?

JOE
That's a big ask.

TOM
So tell me Shakespeare what happened.

JOE
Shakespeare? God, you haven't called me that in years.

TOM
(frustrated)
Because I couldn't find you for years. I mean you just vaporized. Did you leave?

JOE
It's a big city. Easy to get lost
in it.

TOM
I don't buy it. Get lost, you're a
piece of shit.

Silence. Maybe truth?

Brian come back. Winded. He plops on the bench. Takes a
big sip of his Jack & Coke. Closes his eyes and vapes. The
smoke comes out of his mouth and nose. Brian looks at peace.

TOM (CONT'D)
That stuff will kill you.

BRIAN
Hope so. Something will, so why
not this.

JOE
Brian!

BRIAN
Oh, Tom, I mean, Christ, I'm sorry.
I didn't mean any disrespect about
Louise. He cancer and all.

JOE
You are such a dick, Bri.

TOM
(flatly)
Louise never smoked. Never. Not
fucking ever.

BRIAN
Tom, I'm sorry.

TOM
No, no, it's all good.

Tom drinks. He looks at the other two. They all nod and do
a "Cheers" and the plastic cups "Clink" as the air hangs
heavy.

Kids voice playing can be heard. A light breeze blows in.
The "Winds of Acceptance."

EXT. PARK BENCH - A LITTLE LATER

Brian's cell phone "dings" he looks. Reads. Sighs.

TOM
What's up?

BRIAN
Sheena picked up a double. I've got
Wisty all day and night. I hate
being alone.

TOM
Sheena? Last I heard it was Gloria
or Charlene.

JOE
Oof-Charlene. That mouth on her.

TOM
You knew Charlene?

JOE
(laughs)
And Frank.

Silence. Tom blinks.

TOM
Wait-Frank?

BRIAN
(shrugs)
Exploratory phase. Figured I'd try
Joey's route. Frank was fun.
Just... too needy.

JOE
(chuckling)
Frank too needy? That says
everything.

TOM
How the hell did I not know Frank?

JOE
You and Louise were wrapped up with
Rita.

BRIAN
She was your whole world for years,
Tommy.

TOM
What?
(quietly)
God, I needed you guys.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
Rita's 32 now. Louise is gone.
My focus... is gone.

Brian looks at Joe and gives him a "go on, talk" look.

JOE
Tommy.

Tom puts a hand up. Stop.

TOM
Shakespeare just don't. Leaving me
all those years. And what now,
you're gay? How could you not tell
me? Louise adored you.

Joe's heart is heavy.

JOE
I know and I

TOM
No, you don't get to say "I know."
Fuck you.

BRIAN
Hey, hey, let's all relax.

WISTY (O.S.)
Dad! I heard language again. I am
telling Mom.

BRIAN
Ok. Ok, honey I will tell the guys
to watch their language.

TOM
(quietly to Joe)
Fuck you.

The sound of kids playing swells.

Brian vapes. Tom shakes his cup as it is empty. Joe does the same. Brian reaches into the cool and pulls out another SLEEPING BEAUTY and a GREEN BAY Packers set of cups and hands them to the guys. Tom takes the GREEN BAY from Joe and hands him the SLEEPING BEAUTY cup.

TOM (CONT'D)
Here. You be the princess for
awhile. But I guess you're used to
that.

BRAIN

Ok, Ok, now we are all friends here.

TOM

I still am I just got work through, Shakespeare cutting me and Louise off for 30 years. Me I could give a shit, 'cause, well we all go way back, but hurting my Louise, that's gonna take awhile.

Joe looks down. Tom looks at him. Joe looks up with years of hidden truths in his eyes.

A tear slips down Tom's cheek. Joe gets up and pulls Tom into a strong bear hug. Tom cries.

TOM (CONT'D)

(through tears)

I needed you. You know I did. You know my Louise did. How could you just not see her.

JOE

I did. I did see her.

Tom pulls away. Abrupt.

TOM

What did you just say? When did you see her? Where?

JOE

My studio a few times. Coffee over the years.

TOM

Where the hell was I?

JOE

She loved you, Tom. But she felt invisible. Said you were always somewhere else—even when you were right next to her.

Brian is getting nervous.

BRIAN

How about we pack up and go back to my place? All of us. I can cook we can hang out.

TOM
Not just yet. Mr. Joey has some
things to get out first.

Tom gives him a hard push on the left shoulder.

JOE
(calm)
Don't.

TOM
Don't you, Mr. Joey?

Tom shoves Joe-harder.

JOE
(calm, last warning)
Tom. Stop.

TOM
Or what? Sleeping Beauty's gonna
wake the fuck up?

BRIAN
Guys, guys, stop. I got my kid
around.

Tom pushes even harder. Joe hauls off and lands a right hook
on Tom's eye. Tom flies back and lands on the ground.

Wisteria screams.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Jesus, not in front of my kid.

Brian steps off-screen.

BRIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's ok. Uncle Joe was just
playing. They are pretending. You
know how you and Daddy pretend? I
play the monster and you scream and
laugh? Just like that.

Tom looks up from the ground. Joe gives him a hand to help
him up. Tom takes it. They find their place on the bench and
sip their drinks. Old friends can do that.

EXT. PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS

Brian comes back. Tom has the cup on his eye. Joe is rubbing
his hand.

BRIAN

(stern)

You two gonna settle down? I mean it.

TOM

(quietly, raw)

I thought... I really thought I was doing everything right.

They all look at each other and nod in agreement. Like old friends do without ceremony or guidance. Joe stands up and extends his right hand. Tom takes it and squeezes just a little too hard (That is the had Joe used for the punch). Joe starts to raise his left arm into a first and Brian gives him a look.

Tom smiles from ear-to-ear.

A dog runs over and immediately goes to Joe. The dog sniffs at Tom, turns back to Joe and laps up all his attention.

Brian looks at Tom, like "this always happens.

BRIAN

Animals like him. I told him he is gonna be a great Dad.

JOE

Seriously, stop saying that.

They all laugh.

TOM

So let's do this, Shakespeare.

Joe sighs.

JOE

Where do you want to start.

BRIAN

If we are going all the back to high school, we just don't have that much time!

TOM

All I got these days is lots and lots of time.

JOE

Rita? Doesn't she have a family.

TOM
Yea, two kids, boy and girl. Don't
really know them too well.

Brian and Joe look puzzled.

JOE
You whole life was about Louise and
Rita.

TOM
(hard truth)
Seems it was more about Louise and
less about Rita. Louise understand
my work. Rita never forgave me. I
loved Louise. Then chemicals. Then
Well, that's about it. I was there
for Rita as she would say, "I
wasn't present."

BRIAN
Ouch.

JOE
I didn't know.

TOM
(sadly)
I know. Neither did I.

That truth hangs like a final leaf waiting to drift, slowly
to the ground.

Nobody knows what to do with that honesty.

JOE
It's not too late, right.

TOM
You tell me?

WISTY (O.S.)
Uncle Joooooooooey! Come kick the
ball and twirl me around!

BRIAN
Thank God, you're up.

Joe gets up. Eyebrows go up and down.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Don't make her throw up!

JOE
(quietly)
Can't promise that.

He darts off.

JOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Who's ready for Flying Saucers?

Kids all scream with delight!

KIDS (O.S.)
ME! ME!

JOE (O.S.)
Ok one at a time. Wisty you're
first. Let's show them how it's
done.

WE hear Joe talk like a space Martian "Danger Danger" then he
whirls them around.

In Brian's sunglasses we see the action. Brian's face smiles
as he watches and the view we have of the scene in his
sunglasses.

TOM (O.S.)
He would have been a great Dad.

Fade.

EXT. PARK BENCH - LATE AFTERNOON

About 430 P.M.

These scene across the park, dogs kids, parents, lovers,
loners all in same space. The camera turns and on the bench,
Brian has a played-out-fast-asleep Wisteria on his lap, her
legs across Joe's. Tom smiles.

BRIAN
She can sleep through anything. And
when she wakes up, BAM she is ready
to go. Me, I am not like that.
Must take after her mother.

TOM
Speaking of that, how old is she?

BRIAN
(easy)
Wisty is 3.

TOM
No your wife.

BRIAN
They're not married.

TOM
What?

BRIAN
Committed. I would have done it but
Sheena said/

Tom laughs

TOM
Sheena? Like in Easton?

JOE
Now that's a memory. "Morning
Train."

JOE & TOM
(lightly sings)
*"My baby takes the morning train,
he works from 9 to 5 and then"*

They all laugh.

BRIAN
Her mother, SHEENA is 22.

TOM
Holy

Brian give Tom that DAD LOOK "No swearing"

TOM (CONT'D)
Sugar Pops! 22.

JOE
She's a great cook.

TOM
You know her? Like a lot?

JOE
Yes. She's been to my studio.
Wants to put some of her art there.

TOM
She paints?!

BRIAN

(easy)

She *expresses herself*. I don't really understand it.

JOE

She's a natural.

TOM

I've never been to your studio.

Silence. Brian and Joe look down.

TOM (CONT'D)

What?

They look. Then they all know.

TOM (CONT'D)

She was there, wasn't she. My Louise. She was at your studio?

Joe and Tom look. Tom knows.

TOM (CONT'D)

Was it a thing with you two? Were you lovers?

BRIAN

(laughs)

Joe and Louise? Nope different teams.

TOM

I am not following.

BRIAN

Tom, come on, no big deal. I'm very open minded, my friend, I need you to know that. I accepted Joe with open arms.

Tom Looks. Trying to catch up.

JOE

I'm gay. Always have been.

TOM

Yeah I just figured that out. Did Louise know?

JOE

Of course. For years.

Tom gets up. Walk around. Brian looks at Tom and gives him the "Calm Down" look.

TOM
(leans in, angry whisper)
Why the hell am I the last to know?

MOTHER (O.S.)
Brian do you want me to take Wisty with me? I am taking my girls home. She can hang out there for the evening. I talked with Sheena.

Brain looks at the guys. He is a go-with-the-moment- kind-of-guy.

BRIAN
Sure. Sure. That would be great.

He gets up and off-screen hands off Wisteria to the mom.

MOTHER (O.S.)
She can sleep over if you want.
Looks like you guys have some stuff to talk through. Sheena told me.

BRIAN (O.S.)
Well, Ok. Great. Thanks.

Brain comes back. He sits. Closes his eyes and take a deep vape. He blows it out slow.

TOM
Just like that you hand off you child? I would be sick with worry.

BRIAN
Oh God no. Wisteria is so easy going. That she get's from me.

They all nod and "CHEERS" with their plastic cups. Joe tips his back, then signals "empty." Tom does the same.

Brian grins and begins the cup shuffle.

He hands SLEEPING BEAUTY to Joe, GREEN BAY PACKERS to Tom, and picks up the TEDDY BEAR cup for himself.

Then-without warning-he reaches over and swaps GREEN BAY with Tom again.

Tom looks, plays along, and quickly hands the TEDDY BEAR cup to Joe.

Now:

Tom is holding SLEEPING BEAUTY again.

Brian has GREEN BAY.

Joe ends up with TEDDY BEAR.

They all grin at the absurdity. Old friends. Old rhythm.

They claim victory. Joe takes a sip from PRINCE CHARMING and does an over-the-top expression.

JOE
(like great sex)
MMMM. OHHH. MMMM.

TOM
What is it?

JOE
Black Russian!

They settle back and enjoy the late afternoon sun. A leaf falls and gently lands on Brian. He smiles.

BRIAN
12-months of happiness coming my
way!

He puts the leaf in his pocket.

EXT. PARK BENCH - A LITTLE LATER

The sun is starting her decline. The park is glorious with color. Brian still wears his sunglasses, cool guy that he still is.

A man off-screen walks by.

MAN (O.S.)
Hey Brian. You still playing in
the band tomorrow.

BRIAN
Sure thing. I'll have my bass all
set and see you at 9:45.

Brain says this with no pretension. He gets up and walks off screen.

BRIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey would you take a quick picture
of us. We are old friends and I
want to capture this.

MAN (O.S.)
Sure, my pleasure.

Brian returns. He sits in the middle. Joe on his right. Tom on his left. They all hold up their cups. Arms wrapped around shoulders. The easy silence of 42 years is wrapped around them like a blanket of love.

MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Ready?

CLICK.

The photo just taken fills the screen. Joe's warmth, Tom's frailty and Brian's easiness flows.

Brain pops Tom on the back of the head.

BRIAN
Tommy lighten up. OK one more.

Tom takes off Brian's sunglasses and puts them on. They all smile. Cups in hand.

CLICK.

Now that's a keeper. Brian's blue eyes draw you in and the sunglasses on Tom mask to pain. Joe radiates joy.

Brian takes his sunglasses back. He walks off screen.

BRIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Thanks and see you tomorrow.

He comes back and they view the pictures. All glow.

JOE & TOM
Send it to me.

Brian nods and sends it. Joe's phone "dings."

TOM'S PHONE
(Louise's Voice)
Tom, you have a text, take a look.

They all stop.

JOE
Is that Louise?

TOM

She set that up so I wouldn't miss anything. I love to hear her voice. I don't get a lot of messages.

Joe takes out his phone and texts.

TOM'S PHONE

(Louise's Voice)

Tom, you have a text, take a look.

They all let that moment settle on them. A duck walks by slowly and stops in front of Joe. The duck comes over and nuzzles on his leg. Then waddles off.

They all look, nothing needs to be said. Animals love Joe.

TOM

Brian what bar are you playing at tomorrow? I am retired so a 10 o'clock show is fine by me.

BRIAN

St. Luke's.

JOE

Our old parish church? You still go.

TOM

You play in a church band?

BRIAN

Yeah, I try to give back. I always liked church. Felt like home to me. We are all God's people. Love everyone, that's the primary rule!

They all look at each other. Not a surprise, really.

TOM

(to Joe)

You still go?

JOE

No, I didn't really fit in. They don't want people like me.

BRIAN

Of course ,the fuck, we do.

JOE

(laughs)

Can you even say it like that?

They all smile.

Brian's phone buzzes. He checks. Smiles

BRIAN

Ah yes. Score! Wisty is staying over night and they will bring her to church in the morning.

TOM

Dinner still on at your place.

BRIAN

Sure! But first one thing.

TOM

This isn't the "group hug thing" is it?

BRIAN

(sly)

Nah, that comes later.

JOE

Ok what are we doing?

Brian is in the middle. He puts a hand on Joe's leg and a hand on Tom's. He nods like "Your turn" and they each put a hand on Brian's hand.

BRIAN

OK. Now. Close your eyes.

JOE

We're gonna get mugged.

TOM

We're gonna get laughed at.

BRIAN

Shh. Now eyes closed. Just Breathe.
Listen to all the life around you.
Listen to every sound.

The camera pulls back. The sounds of the park come in off-screen. The leaves. The grass. The air.

The camera sees the park and the colors in the reflection of Brian's glasses.

SMASH CUT:

EXT. PARK BENCH - 20 YEARS LATER

An older Joe(77) is on the bench. Eyes closed. The easy sounds of the park.

BRIAN (V.O.)
 (like angels in the
 distance)
 Shh. Now eyes closed. Just Breath.
 Listen to all the life around you.
 Listen to every sound.

In his mind we see the picture of that day on the bench with the three of them: Tom, Brian and Joe.

The camera looks up to the sky.

Wisteria (23) is off-screen.

WISTY (O.S.)
 (faintly like a dream
 voice)
 Uncle Joe.

Her hand is seen gently scratching his cheek. He leans into it.

WISTY (CONT'D)
 Uncle Joe?

He wakes up. Gets his bearings.

JOE
 Wisteria. My you've grown to be
 such a beautiful woman. You dad
 would be so proud.

A leaf floats and falls onto Joe's lap. He smiles.

WISTY
 Oh, Uncle Joe! 12-months of good
 luck.

JOE
 (pause)
 Awesome. Want to share it with me?

Wisteria's son Little Joe (3) is heard.

LITTLE JOE (O.S.)
 Mom is Uncle Joe ok? Will He do
 Flying Saucers with me.

Joe's face lights up.

JOE
Oh you bet I will.

He goes off. Not Runs but goes.

WISTY (O.S.)
Now, Uncle Joe, don't make him
sick. Easy.

JOE
(MARTIAN VOICE)
DANGER. DANGER.

Little Joe screams with delight.

The camera blurs and shows Joe doing the whirling spaceship
with little Joe. They all laugh.

The camera turns back to the bench. There by the backpacks
and sweaters is the faded TEDDY BEAR cup. Part of the Bear is
worn off.

The cup looks used and loved.

The camera close in on the bear. The bear comes alive on the
cup.

THE BEAR
(soft, old-soul)
This is your life. Share it.

SILENCE.

A little hand reaches in and grabs hold of the cup.

LITTLE JOE (V.O.)
(little boy voice)
I'm thirsty.

The bear winks.

THE END

